

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to recite all of the limitations of claim 25, 27, and 28. Claims 25-28 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Independent claims 50, 52-55, 57, and 59 have each been amended to recite dissolving the mold in a solution containing fluoride ions.

New dependent claims 60-81 have added, based on claims 1, 19, 23, and 24. Claims 60, 63, 66, 69, 72, 75, and 78 recite heating the ceramic precursor to produce a structure comprising a ceramic. Claims 61, 64, 67, 70, 73, 76, 79, and 81 recite curing the ceramic precursor in the mold. Claims 62, 65, 68, 71, 74, 77, 80, and 82 recite that the ceramic precursor is cured in the mold under an inert and/or a moisture-free atmosphere. Accordingly, no new matter has been added.

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9-24, 29-38, 50, 52-55 and 57-82 are now pending for examination.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) with respect to Fain

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 17-26, 30, 37, and 57 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fain, *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 5,340,515 ("Fain"). Additionally, claim 10 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fain.

Applicants do not concede the merits of the rejections of these claims in view of Fain. However, Applicants have elected to amend independent claim 1 to recite the limitations of claim 28 (including all intervening dependent claims), which was not rejected in view of Fain. Claim 57 has been similarly amended. Thus, these claims are now allowable in view of Fain. The remaining claims have been cancelled or depend from claim 1, and are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants have made these amendments solely for the purpose of expediting the patent application process, and reserve the right to pursue claims similar or identical to the rejected claims as pending prior to cancellation or amendment herein in one or more applications claiming priority to the present application.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) with respect to Schueller

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 11-22, 25, 26, 30-38, 50, 53-55 and 59 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schueller, *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 6,143,412

("Schueller"). Additionally, claims 10 and 52 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schueller.

Applicants do not concede the merits of any of the rejections of claims in view of Schueller. However, solely to expedite the patent prosecution process, Applicants have elected to rewrite independent claim 1 to recite all of the limitations of dependent claim 28 (including all intervening claims), which was not rejected in view of Schueller. Independent claims 50, 52-55, and 59 have been similarly amended. Thus, it is believed that these claims are now allowable in view of Schueller. The remaining claims have been cancelled or depend from claim 1, and are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicants reserve the right to pursue claims similar or identical to the rejected claims as pending prior to the amendment herein in one or more applications claiming priority to the present application.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) with respect to Schueller in view of Warren

Claim 27 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schueller in view of Warren, *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 4,250,127 ("Warren").

Claim 27 ultimately depends from independent claim 1. As claim 27 has been cancelled, it is believed that this rejection is now moot.

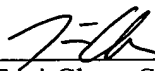
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks, this application should now be in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this response, that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the Applicants' representatives at the telephone number listed below.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicants hereby request any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

By: 

Tani Chen, Sc.D., Reg. No. 52,728
Timothy J. Oyer, Ph.D., Reg. No. 36,628
WOLF, GREENFIELD & SACKS, P.C.
Federal Reserve Plaza
600 Atlantic Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02210-2206
Tel. (617) 646-8000